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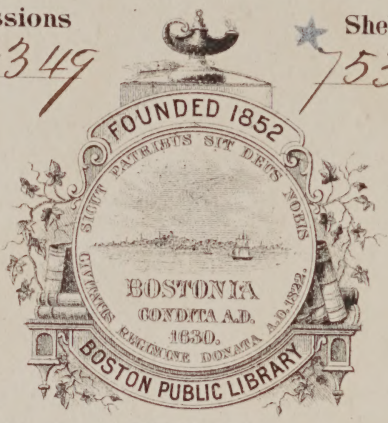

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THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM.
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MISSIONARY SERMON.

BY

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A. J. Corsen
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NOTE.—The substance of the following Discourse was delivered at Bangor, Maine, in August last, at the ordination of the Rev. E. P. ROBERTS, as a Missionary to Micronesia. It has since been repeated here, and elsewhere—recently at the Missionary Convention held at Pittsfield—and is now published at the request of the MILLS THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, with the hope that it may strengthen the faith of the friends of missions.

WILLIAMS COLLEGE, JAN. 1, 1858.

SERMON.

ROMANS IV. 13.

FOR THE PROMISE, THAT HE SHOULD BE THE HEIR OF THE WORLD, WAS NOT TO ABRAHAM, OR TO HIS SEED, THROUGH THE LAW, BUT THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.

IN the passage now read from the word of God, we have, First, the fact that it entered into the original conception of the religion of the Bible, that it should be universal. The promise to Abraham was, that he should be "the heir of the *world*."

We have, Secondly, the grand characteristic, from the first, of the religion of the Bible, and that by which it is fitted to become universal. Abraham was to be the heir of the world *through the righteousness of faith*.

We have, Thirdly, the ground on which the people of God have expected, and do expect, that this religion will become universal. The *promise* was to Abraham.

And we have, Fourthly, as implied in the last, the principle of action which must sustain those who labor to make this religion universal—*faith* in the promise. These points we now propose to consider.

We say then, First, that it entered into the original conception of the religion of the Bible, that it should become universal.

As it is the object of Christianity, and especially of the missionary work, to establish a universal religion, it becomes us to inquire into the origin and history of this idea.

Ideas giving impulse and direction to human thought and effort, may either originate with God, or with man. The idea of the law of gravitation did not originate with Newton. It had been operative in the works of God thousands of years before he was born, and was as really expressed in the movements of those works, as a thought is expressed in a sentence. It lay behind those movements, as the thought behind a sentence; was presupposed by them, was their upholding and informing principle. And so we say that the idea of a universal religion originated with God, was communicated by him to man, and is, to Him, like the law of the planetary motions, one of those great ideas, in accordance with which, and for the realization of which He works. True, this idea may spring at once from a correct conception of the attributes and claims of the true God, and so, when once made known, commends itself to our reason; still, as man was situated, we say it could have come only from God.

It was more than four hundred years after the flood, when the promise referred to in the text, that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him, was made to Abraham. The race had been dispersed over the earth, had been divided into different tribes, with different languages, and idolatry in various forms had become nearly or quite universal. With idolatry is naturally connected the idea of local divinities, and the impression, still prevalent among the heathen, that each religion is good, and the best for its own locality. The earth had not been explored. Nothing was known of its form, or of its extent; nothing of the capabilities of the race for extension, or for various forms of culture and organization. The tendency then was, not to centralization any where, but to wider dispersions, the reach of which no man could foresee, and which might be so wide as to sunder per-

manently, as they did for ages, the relations of different parts of the race. There was no writing then, no printing, no system of roads or of intercommunication. The race was not only idolatrous, but nomadic and predatory. It was a great thing for Abraham to go out from his kindred and his father's house, to a land which he knew not of; and nothing but the special protection of God could have prevented him from being plundered and slain. War, indeed, not for the purpose of union, but of plunder and subjection, seems to have been then, as it was subsequently, the great business and ground of distinction among men.

Under such circumstances, the suggestion that a universal religion either was then, or ever could become possible, would seem entirely aside from the laws of human thought. It was no light thing thus to claim to know the future for all time; and to recognize the highest and only true bond of unity for the race; and to conceive that that unity might be realized, and to utter this with the simplicity and majesty and unfaltering certainty which we find only in the Scriptures.

And then, if the suggestion were made, it would seem still farther aside from the laws of human motive and effort, that any man should deny himself, and labor for such an end. Aside from the religion of the Bible, such a person as a Christian Missionary could not be conceived of. No motive, merely human, could call men off from their apathy, their toil, their sensuality, their ambition, and lead them to such labors as would be requisite to establish a religion that could become universal. No, my friends, it was not for man, thus situated, to originate an idea so far-reaching and comprehensive, so exciting and elevating, so alien from all that was, and so consonant with all that ought to be, as that of one, true, exclusive, universal religion. It was not for any one individual, especially one who had none of the ordinary grounds of distinction, who built no city, founded no state,

conquered no country, wrote no book, who was a wanderer dwelling in tents, to conceive of himself as holding such a relation to all nations, that they should be blessed in him; and the fact that this was foretold of such an individual nearly four thousand years ago, and that it has come to pass to such an extent, is conclusive proof that the Bible is from God, and that the promise will be completely fulfilled.

But strong as this proof is, it becomes more so when we look at the history of this idea. It had no gradual growth, was from no tendency of society, or progress of the mind; but appeared in its completeness, like an apparition from heaven. Like such an apparition, it appeared for a moment, and then departed.

And not only did it thus appear and depart, but it appeared in combination with an idea that seemed its opposite, and departed leaving that idea wholly dominant. The chief marvel connected with this promise is, not its universality simply, but its combination of universality with exclusiveness. The covenant was with Abraham, and its immediate effect was, not to unite him with others, but to separate him from them, even from his kindred and his father's house. This separation continued while he lived, during the lives of the patriarchs, and became still more exclusive under the Mosaic dispensation, one great object of which was to separate the Jews from other nations. Here was a seeming inconsistency, which could have proceeded only on the deepest knowledge of what the completed circle of God's providence would be. It was like Columbus seeking the Indies by sailing in an opposite direction. It was like the change of the egg into a grub, when the promise had been that it should be a butterfly. There was doubtless provision for a three-fold development, as there is in insect life for a three-fold organization; but this was utterly beyond the reach of human ken, and could as little have been foretold by man without experience, as the changes in the insect.

And indeed, when we look at these three-fold organizations of insect life, each preceding one, so slowly and strangely preparatory, so identical, and yet so diverse; when we see it, now creeping upon the earth, now enclosed in its web, and now floating in freedom and beauty in the upper air; and then look at the Patriarchal dispensation passing into the Mosaic; at the Mosaic enclosing itself within its web of rites and ceremonies; and then, at the expansion and glory and universality of the Christian dispensation, it is difficult not to feel that the one is related to the other, though it be but as the slightest sketch of a great master to his masterpiece. May not this be? Is it too much to believe that He who forms in the dew-drop the image of the sun, who has established corresponding ratios of distance between the leaves of the plant and the orbits of the planets, should thus show, as in a glass, through the structure and changes of that which is lowest and most transient in his works, something of the march and glory of that which is highest and most permanent?

But however this may be, the promise was made, not only with no apparent provision for its fulfillment, but in connection with an arrangement by which, in all human probability, it must have been counter-worked.

Originating thus high up upon the hoary peaks of time, and in combination with an element apparently its opposite, this idea, this element of universality, just showed itself, and then, like water that finds a subterranean channel, it disappeared. From that time till the coming of Christ, there was nothing in the history of the world to indicate that such an element existed. There was nothing to show any tendency towards universality. Every thing indicated the reverse. Compared with the nations around them, the people of God were generally a small people, and their system of polity was neither attractive nor aggressive. In the course of events, there was no breath, no token, no movement, to indicate any

such principle; and yet we find it bursting up in prophecy, along the track of time, like fountains in the desert, and so as to show a divine and irrepressible force.

And the striking point here, one affording conclusive proof of the truth of the Bible, is that the utterances and overflowings of prophecy became more distinct and full, as the prospect of their fulfillment, on the grounds of experience and probability, became more and more dark. It was when the idolatries of the heathen had become multiplied and confirmed, when the glory of Israel had declined, and the nation was ready to go into captivity, or had already gone, that we find the utterances of her poets and prophets most fully inspired with this idea. With great variety of expression, and with unmistakable clearness, they foretell a time when wars shall cease, and the peaceable kingdom of Immanuel shall be every where established. "Nation," say they, "shall not lift up sword against nation." "The idols He shall utterly abolish." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it." "The kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in *every place* incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering."

The next point to be noticed in the history of this idea, is the place it occupies in the Christian dispensation. And here the marvel is not less, and wholly unaccountable except on the supposition that Christ was what he claimed to be. Like that of the being of a God, this is one of those ideas which the Saviour did not so much formally announce, as take for granted. He assumed it as entering into his relig-

ion, as a matter of course, and in this there was unspeakable grandeur. He said, "I am the light of the *world*." "The field is the world." He commanded his disciples to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Here we find this idea appearing at the opening of the new dispensation, as it had before at that of the old; but whereas it was then a prophecy, it was now a *purpose*. The transition from a mere thought, a conception, an imagination, to a purpose, is a great one; and, in comparing the old dispensation with the new, it is here that we find one of the great points both of identity and of transition. The underlying conception in the old dispensation was an ultimate universality. That was really its glory, and it was only by the adoption of that as an object and a purpose, that the religion of Christ could become the fulfillment, the antitype, the expansion, the transfiguration of the old dispensation. Accordingly we behold Christ—doubtless the one solitary person of the race who had ever cherished, or even formed such a purpose—taking the ancient promise, eliminating its really great element and placing that in front, and then saying to the world, "I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill." So doing, he became the central point towards which all in the past that belonged to the old covenant converged, and from which all in the great future must radiate and expand. As he alone gave to the law its spiritual interpretation, so did he alone give to the promise its true expansion. If, then, Christ was not from God, how unaccountable in him the idea even of a universal religion! How much more so that he should quietly, and as it were unconsciously, assume it as a part of his system! How much more still, that in him, in him alone, it should become a purpose! And most of all, that he should announce that this purpose would be accomplished by his own crucifixion! "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

In the history of this idea, but one step remains. Receiving it from Christ now in the form of a purpose, the disciples, immediately after his resurrection, commenced their labors for its realization. Then was seen the true spirit of Christian missionaries; a spirit of self-denial and faith, which, if it could return into the church, would soon cause the gospel to be preached in every nation under heaven. Then every church was of course a missionary society, and every church member held himself ready to serve the church, and the great Head of the church, wherever he might be called.

But those days passed away. The spirit of worldliness and of self-aggrandizement stole in. The man of sin began to assert his supremacy, and the night of the dark ages set in. The Reformation was a great work; but, as its name imports, it was a work within the church, and it was not till recent times that she began again to feel the inspiration of this great purpose. But now the apathy of ages is broken. The church begins to remember that she is the heir of the *world;* the voice of the ancient promise rises and swells upon her ear; it seems like a new revelation, and she feels that it is time to arise and take possession of the promised inheritance. It is almost within our own day, that "the angel having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," has renewed his flight; and we trust that flight shall not cease till there shall be heard in heaven those great voices saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Such is a slight sketch of the origin and progress of that great idea which was involved in the promise made to Abraham.

Let us now consider, Secondly, as indicated in the text, that grand characteristic of the religion of the Bible by which it

is fitted to become universal. Abraham was to be the heir of the world *through the righteousness of faith.*

And here it is certainly remarkable, that in that transaction with the father of the faithful, in which the old dispensation commenced, there should be found, in such close connection with that idea of universality which was to be the consummation of the religion, the peculiarity by which that religion should be distinguished from all others, and should be fitted to become universal. The promise to Abraham was, that he should be the heir of the world, and it was *the very believing of this that was counted to him for righteousness.* So says the Apostle. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." In believing this, he believed in a Saviour to come, and so he became the heir of the world, "not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

The term "righteousness," is here used by the Apostle to signify a mode of justification. Ordinarily, "the righteousness of God" would indicate a personal quality in him; but as used in this Epistle, it indicates the method which he has adopted of constituting and declaring his people righteous; that is, the justification which is of God. Thus in the third chapter, 21st and 22d verses, "But now, the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe." Certainly, God has no personal righteousness "without the law," or, "which is by faith of Jesus Christ."

Here then we have, brought face to face in the text, the only two modes of justification before God, that are possible; and we are told that the religion for man—for the race—is not to be through the law, or any of its works, but through the righteousness of faith; that is, that it is to be a justification wholly free and gratuitous. "It is of faith, that it might

be by grace." This it is that makes the gospel to be what it is—the evangel, the good tidings, a proclamation of mercy and of free salvation. This is the central evangelical element. It presupposes the claims of Law, else there could be no salvation. It presupposes the Atonement, "that God might be just, while he justifies the ungodly;" but the salvation itself is wholly free. There is no condition even, but that of acceptance. Repentance and faith are sometimes said to be conditions; but in this it is forgotten that holiness itself is essentially the salvation, and that repentance and faith are but the forms in which holiness must necessarily begin. They are the acceptance.

That this characteristic of justification by faith, that is, of a free salvation, fits the religion to become universal, is plain, because it recognizes man simply as a sinner. It knows nothing of him in any other relation; nothing of age, or sex, or rank, or wealth, or knowledge, or country, or color, or race. There is here, "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all." "In Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but *faith* that worketh by love." Wherever, therefore, there is a human being who knows that he is a sinner, and desires to be delivered from the power and curse of sin, there this doctrine will be welcome. O, how welcome! It is no system of metaphysics, or of dogmas; it is a proclamation; it is good tidings; it is rest to the weary, peace to the tempest-tossed; it is forgiveness and free salvation.

Here the gospel is broadly distinguished from all mere systems of development, and training, and culture, which require time and a system of appliances. And this distinction is so vital that it was signalized by our Saviour in the salvation of the thief on the cross. Both the thieves reviled him, but one of them had but to turn upon him the eye of faith and say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into

thy kingdom," and instantly the reply was, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." All his relations and prospects were changed in a moment. Hence the gospel may be carried at once to the ignorant, the degraded, the abandoned. Clothed with supernatural power, there is no depth of degradation or extremity of suffering which it cannot reach. To the hut of poverty, it bears a wealth which the world cannot give; to the dungeon of the captive, the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free; and, though rejected till then, yet, in the hour of sickness and death, it can gild the pallid countenance with the light of hope, and the radiance of a celestial joy.

But not merely because it regards man solely as a sinner, and makes salvation a gift, does this principle of justification by faith adapt Christianity to become universal. It thus adapts it because it is as simple as one of the great laws of nature, and is yet as complex in its relations, and as pervading in its results, as are those laws. How simple it is! Only to believe! And yet it will adjust rightly all the relations of man to God, to himself, and to society.

Without faith in God, man is alienated from him, and can neither love nor obey him. With it, the filial relation is restored. This involves a recognition of the paramount claims of God; it involves ultimate heirship, and all essential good.

Without this faith, man rests upon his native goodness and on his works, and thus is fostered *pride*, that primal sin of the spirit, not only in its relations to God, but to itself. But this doctrine strikes at the root of all pride. It leaves man, in respect to salvation, no ground of his own, not the least self-righteousness, and this brings him to the foot of the cross. It is when he feels his own utter destitution, and only then, that he will come and ask at the hand of mercy, free and sovereign, what he needs. This is submission; and when the

pride that struggled against this departs, then comes in *peace*, and a cheerful obedience, born of gratitude and love.

But in thus adjusting the relations of man to God and to himself, those of society will be adjusted also. A true religion must include a perfect morality. Self-adjustment implies it. But justification by faith has a special relation to those pervading and unutterable evils in society, which spring from superstition and formalism. These it would sweep utterly away. They always imply works as opposed to faith, and not works from faith. They imply something outward, done on the supposition that it will avail to some extent as the ground of salvation. Of these, especially of the spirit of formalism, how full is the whole world! How full especially of superstition, are the papal and heathen worlds! How appalling the power which these give to man over the conscience of his fellow; and through this, how mighty the support they have lent to systems of civil oppression! They have sat as an incubus upon the nations. They have converted the very church and temple of God into a den of thieves and the stronghold of tyranny. But when this has been done, the simple sling and stone by which these giants have been slain, is the doctrine of justification by faith. It was the proclamation of this by Luther, that caused the knees of the papacy to smite together; and now, there is no doctrine so hated by Rome, and by all who tend thitherward. This is the doctrine that Rome really combats at every point, that heathenism and tyranny every where combat, because this alone brings all men into immediate relation to Christ as the sole Head of the Church, and so, dispenses with all those forms and intermediate agencies through which they have been degraded and oppressed. Before this, would vanish at once the confessional, and indulgences, and penances, and pilgrimages, and masses, and prayers for the dead, and prayers to saints, and mawkish mixtures of modern senti-

mentalism and mediæval superstitions ;—all the modifications of superstition, in short, whether in the heathen, or the nominally Christian world ; and in place of these there would come the simple worship of God in spirit and in truth, and "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

This, then, is the doctrine for man as a sinner. It is for all, and to be received by all in precisely the same way. It is for the king, for without it he must become poorer and more powerless than the lowest of his subjects who receive it ; it is for the scholar and the philosopher, for without it they have no light that will not go out in the darkness of the tomb ; and this too is the doctrine for the poor benighted heathen, for he too is a man and a sinner.

But while we say that there is thus an adaptation and a tendency in the religion of the Bible to become universal, we yet say that this has not been, and is not now, the ground on which the people of God expect that it will become so. That ground, as is stated in our Third proposition, which we now proceed to consider, is the promise of God. "The *promise* was to Abraham."

In reasoning from adaptations and tendencies, we must regard, not those only, but also obstacles and opposing influences. There is in the seed a tendency to grow, but this may be so checked and thwarted by an adverse soil and climate, that no one would predict of the plant, that it would ever reach its full size, or, perhaps, even maintain a feeble and sickly life. So with the religion of the Bible. Till the time of Christ, neither its adaptation nor tendency to become universal could have been perceived ; and since then, such have been its reverses and perversions, for long periods, that no human sagacity could have predicted its ultimate triumph. Missionary zeal has not been stimulated by a philosophical perception of adaptations and tendencies. There never has been a time when, on grounds of mere reason,

and without reference to supernatural agency, it would have been rational to predict even the continuance of a pure Christianity. It would not be rational to predict it now. We hear much, indeed, at present, of civilization and commerce; of science and the arts; of ocean steamers and ocean telegraphs; and it is thought, by some, that these herald and will secure the progress of Christianity. These we would not undervalue. They are the indirect product of Christianity, but there is in them literally nothing to move it forward. They may be as the wheels upon which it shall move, but even then it will be only as the "spirit of the living creature is in the wheels." Let the vitalizing force of Christianity be withdrawn from society, and the car of civilization will be unfastened from its engine, and will come to a stop. But Christianity itself has moved on by a divine energy; it has advanced against all calculations of probabilities, and only by conflict. Its life has been through death. That life has been in God, and from God. It must be so still, and He only can assure us of its continuance, or predict its range.

The future can be known by us only in two ways—either from the experience of the past, or from the promise or prediction of one who has it under his control. These grounds are quite distinct, and may seem, and be, opposed to each other. The prediction of a final conflagration and general judgment, is in opposition to all experience. In such cases, there is a conflict between the evidence for the permanence of the present system and the truth of the promise. This has sometimes been called a conflict between reason and faith, but is really only a question for reason, of evidence and of fact; and it is not difficult to show, on grounds of reason, that confidence in the word of a moral being who can control the future, must be a firmer basis of belief than any experience of the past can be. Only admit that there is a God, and that this universe is controlled for moral ends, as

it must be if he be God, and it will be seen at once, from the very nature of the element of experience, that it must be as nothing when opposed to the word of God, and that there can, therefore, be no conflict between faith and reason, respecting any of the great facts of the future, revealed in the Bible. What is it for a particular order in a material system to come to an end? Another, and a better order may succeed it; but if the truth of God fail, that is a subversion of all foundations, and an end of all order, physical and moral. Hence the promise of God is rationally the firmest ground on which confidence can rest; and it is precisely and only on this that we do rest in our belief that this world shall be given to Christ. *We believe the promise; and belief in a promise, from confidence in the promiser, is faith.*

This brings us to consider, finally, the principle of action which must sustain those, and especially missionaries, who labor to make this religion universal—Faith in the promise.

The labors and trials of the missionary are peculiar. This is not, as is often supposed, because he must leave friends and country, and break up cherished associations, and go and dwell among a strange, a heathen, and a degraded people. Others do this, and in great numbers, from the love of gain. His great trial is, when he has reached a heathen shore, in giving himself there, during the best years of his life, with no hope of any thing but a bare support, in singleness of heart, with earnestness, with diligence, with watchfulness and prayer, in the midst of apathy, ignorance, low vice, suspicion and opposition, to the work of enlightening and saving a people whom he knows only as the children of a common Father, and as those for whom Christ died. To do this, is not of nature unrenewed. It requires the support, not merely of a high aim, but of a divine principle; and such is faith.

Here faith is regarded not merely as a ground of belief, nor yet in its relations to a mode of justification by God, but

as a principle of action. Being not simply belief, but confidence, and belief only from confidence, it takes hold of the emotive nature, and so may become a principle of action. Being confidence in *God*, it may become the strongest, the deepest, the most pervading, as well as the most rational principle by which we can be moved. This is needed, not by missionaries only. It has been, and is, distinctively, *the* religious principle—the source of strength and endurance to the whole church. This, as was just said, is a divine principle. It is apart from all others; it may be opposed to them. It does not judge by sense, or by past experience. Let its warrant be clear, and it knows nothing of difficulties or impossibilities. It says, "With God all things are possible." If called upon to step out of the ship into the water, it will step out. It believes in a God who is mightier than nature; and hence its range of expectation is not limited by nature, and it can believe in future events, and labor for future consummations, of which nature and experience can furnish no ground of expectation. Hence, too, to those who judge from nature and experience only, its projects must seem madness, its hope delusive, and its labors inexplicable. By those of them who condescend to notice it at all, it is looked upon with a pity, sometimes wondering, but oftener derisive. This antagonism has always existed, and always will. But faith holds on its way, and the mockers die, and the great plans of God, of which they never had even a glimpse, move on. This is no untried principle. At the opening of the old dispensation, in connection with the very promise referred to in the text, God purposely laid upon it a stress and a pressure that tested its power. "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went." "By faith, when he was tried, he offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it

was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called." "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "By faith," also, "Moses," the head of the Jewish dispensation, "esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and endured as seeing Him who is invisible." "By faith, the Israelites passed through the Red Sea;" by faith the ancient worthies performed their wonders. Nor has this principle lost its power under the new dispensation. It supported the Apostles as it did Abraham. It sustained the martyrs. It carried Luther to the Diet of Worms. It led our Pilgrim Fathers across the ocean; and when modern missionaries have gone out, like Abraham, into some place which the church should afterwards receive for an inheritance, not knowing whither they went, they have gone by faith. And so they go now, thus honoring the Lord Jesus, and giving the best possible testimony to the value of that salvation which he came to bring. No, this principle has not lost its power; it never can lose it while God lives, and man is his child.

Having thus considered the points proposed, I ask you to notice their remarkable combination in the text. We have here, not only the promise of a universal religion, so wonderful; and its freeness by which it is fitted to become universal, not less wonderful; and the promise as the sole basis of our expectation, putting this religion wholly aside from nature and above it; but in our labors to make this religion universal, we have the impulse and strength of that very confidence by which the promise was originally accepted, and by which we ourselves accepted of a free salvation.

From this subject I observe, first, that the object of the missionary is the noblest that can call forth the energies of man. Some labor solely for pay. These are hirelings. Some, again, labor from the inspiration of the idea they

would realize. It is in them as a fire in their bones, and if it be a moral one, they are moulded into its image. Such are artists, patriots, philanthropists, heroes; and of the kind of inspiration that is in all these, there can be no more perfect example than the true missionary. His object is wider in its range, and more beneficial in its results, than any other. Men labor for civil liberty and human rights, but a thorough religious revolution and renovation would involve such individual, as well as social and civil changes, as would secure all the rights and the highest well-being of man. Let there but be the spiritual regeneration of all into the image of one who represents a perfect manhood; let there be the mutual attractions which must flow from such a similarity; let there be the subjection of all to the same moral laws, and the union of all in love to the same common Saviour, and the best purposes of all revolutions would be reached. Society would be moulded into the image of heaven.

We see, in the second place, that the missionary work is not chimerical, and the certainty of the ultimate triumph of the religion of the Bible.

This idea of a universal religion, as we have seen, originated with God; its realization was foretold by his prophets in the darkest hours; it was adopted by the Saviour; was made by him a purpose and a command; and we have reason to believe, from the movements of Providence, and from the fact that the religious nature is central in man, that this is the central idea in the administration of the world. Nothing short of this has ever been proposed by the church of Christ; and now, when she is awake to it as but once before, how grandly does the voice of the old promise, that has bided its time for four thousand years, mingle itself with the expectations and hopes of an awakening race, with the portents of change, and with those movements of Providence which have been of late, and are now as the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.

Only when the time is ripe, do great events spring from little causes. It is but fifty-one years ago, that a few young men knelt in prayer for the heathen, beside a haystack. As their prayers ceased, the sun, which had been hidden by a passing storm, shone forth, and the bow of promise spanned the eastern sky. It was the token of God upon the cloud. From that day to this, his smile has rested on the cause. It is less than fifty years since the American Board, of which that meeting was the germ, was formed, and now it may be said of its missionary stations, as has been said of the military posts of Great Britain, that the sun never sets upon them. As he rises in the farthest East, he beholds them, first, in China, then in India, then in Persia, then in the Turkish empire, then in Western Africa, then among the Indians on this continent, then in the Sandwich Islands, and then in Micronesia; thus belting the globe. Not by the drum-beat, calling to arms, are his morning beams welcomed at all these stations; but by the voice of prayer, and the proclamation of "peace on earth, good-will to men." Every where those walls of exclusion which, fifty years ago, rose to the very heavens, are prostrate. Every where there is a feeling of unrest, and of indefinite yearning, and the moral and social elements of a world wait the plastic hand of a pure Christianity. The period of those dispersions by which relations were sundered, is now past. The divergency was not, as it seemed, in straight lines, but upon a globe, and in a circle which now tends to its completion. The tendency to unity through science, the arts, and commerce, as well as through missionary labors, is not less remarkable than the original tendency to dispersion. The nations are fast nearing a point of intercommunication and reciprocal influence, where that which is effete must be swept away, and that which is artificial must be destroyed; and the feebler moral forces must give way before those which have an undying life from nature and from God. Towards this point there

has been a tendency from the beginning. The movement has indeed been slow, and not such as man would have expected; but it has been analogous to the great movements of God in his providence and in his works. So, if we may credit the geologists, has this earth reached its present state. So have moved on the great empires. So retribution follows crime. So rise the tides. So grows the tree, with long intervals of repose and of apparent death. So comes on the spring, with battling elements and frequent reverses, with snow-banks and violets, and, if we had no experience, we might be doubtful what the end would be. But we know that back of all this, beyond these fluctuations, away in the serene heavens, the sun is moving steadily on; that these very agitations of the elements and seeming reverses, are not only the sign, but the *result* of his approach, and that the full warmth and radiance of the summer noontide are sure to come. So, O Divine Redeemer, Sun of Righteousness, come thou! So will He come. It may be through clouds and darkness and tempest; but the heaven where He is, is serene; He is "travelling in the greatness of his strength;" and as surely as the throne of God abides, we know He shall yet reach the height and splendor of the highest noon, and that the light of millennial glory shall flood the earth.

Who then is in sympathy with Christ? What are we willing to do to help forward this great cause?